

outcast thanne thilke provostrie? And, as I have seyd a litel herbiform, that thilke thing that hath no propre beautee of himself receiveth somtyme prys & shyninge, and somtyme leseth it by the opinioun of usaunces. Now yif that dignitees thanne ne mowen nat maken folk digne of reverence, and yif that dignitees wexen foule of hir wille by the filthe of shrewes, & yif that dignitees lesen hir shyninge by chaunginge of tymes, and yif they wexen foule by estimacioun of poeple: what is it that they han in hemself of beautee that oughte ben desired? as who seyth, non; thanne ne mowen they yeven no beautee of dignitee to non other.

Metre IV.

Quamvis se, Tyrio superbus ostro.

Al be it so that the proude Nero, with alle his wode luxurie, kembde him & aparalede him with faire purpres of Cirie, and with whyte perles, algates yit throf he hateful to alle folk: this is to seyn, that al was he behated of alle folk. Yit this wikked Nero hadde gret lordship, and yaf whylom to the reverent senatours the unworshipful setes of dignitees. Unworshipful setes he clepeth here, for that Nero, that was so wikked, yaf tho dignitees. Whoso wolde thanne reasonably wenen, that blisfulnesse were in swiche honours as ben yeven by vicious shrewes?

Prose V.

An vero regna regumque familiaritas.

At regnes and familiaritees of kinges, may they maken a man to ben mighty? How elles, whan hir blisfulnesse dureth perpetuety? But certes, the olde age of tyme passed, and eek of present tyme now, is ful of ensamples how that kinges ben chaunged into wretchednesse out of hir welefulnesse. Of a noble thing and a cleer thing is power, that is nat founden mighty to kepen itself! And yif that power of reaumes be auctour and maker of blisfulnesse, yif thilke power lakketh on any syde, amenuseth it nat thilke blisfulnesse and bringeth in wretchednesse? But yit, al be it so that the reaumes of mankinde strechen brode, yit mot ther nede ben moche folk, over whiche that every king ne hath no lordship ne comaundement. And certes, upon thilke syde that power failleth, which that maketh folk blisful, right on that same

sydenoun/power entreth undermeth, that maketh hem wrecches; in this manere of wretchednesse than of welefulnesse. A tyraunt, that was king of Sisile, hadde assayed the peril of his estat, that ede by similitude the dredes of reaumes by gastnesse of a swerd that heng over the heved of his familier. What thing is thanne this power, that may nat don awey the bytinges of bisinesse, ne eschewe the prikes in sikernes, but they may nat; and yif they glorifye hem in hir power. Holdest thou thanne that thilke man be mighty, that thou seest that he wolde don that he may nat don? And holdest thou thanne him a mighty man, that hath envioumed his sydes with men of armes or serjaunts, & dredeth more hem that he maketh agast than they dreden him, and that is put in the handes of his servaunts for he sholde seme mighty? But of familiees or servaunts of kinges what sholde I telle thee anything, sin that I myself have shewed thee that reaumes hemself ben ful of grete feblesse? The whiche familiees, certes, the ryal power of kinges, in hool estat and in estat abated, ful ofte throweth adown. Nero constreynede Senek, his familier and his mayster, to chesen on what deeth he wolde deyen. Antonius comaunded that knightes slown with hir swerdes Papinian his familier, which Papinian hadde ben longe tyme fulmighty amonges hem of the court. And yit, certes, they wolden bothe han renounced hir power; of whiche two Senek enforcede him to yeven to Nero his riches, & also to han gon into solitarie exil. But whan the grete weighte, that is to seyn, of lordes power or of fortune, draweth hem that shullen falle, neither of hem ne mighte do that he wolde. What thing is thanne thilke power, that though men han it, yit they ben agast; and whanne thou woldest han it, thou nart nat sikere; & yif thou woldest forleten it, thou mayest nat eschuen it? But whether swiche men ben frendes at nede, as ben conseyled by fortune and nat by vertu? Certes, swiche folk as weleful fortune maketh frendes, contrarious fortune maketh hem enemies. And what pestilence is more mighty for to annoy a wight than a familier enemy?

Metre V.

Qui se volet esse potentem.

Al so wol be mighty, he mot daunten his cruel corage, ne putte nat his nekke, overcomen, under the foule reynes of lecherye, for albeit so that thy lordship streche so far

that the contree of Inde quaketh at thy comaundements or at thy lawes, and that the last ile in the see, that hight Tyle, be thral to thee, yif thou mayest nat putten away thy foule derke desyrs, & dryven out fro thee wretched complaints, certes, it nis no power that thou hast.

Prose VI.

Gloria vero quam fallax saepe.

At glorie, how deceivable and how foul is it ofte! for which thing nat unskilfully a tragedien, that is to seyn, a maker of dietes that highten tragedies, cryde & seide: O glorie, glorie, quod he, thou art nothing elles to thousandes of folkes but a greet sweller of eres! For manye han had ful greet renoun by the false opinioun of the poeple, and what thing may ben thought fouler than swiche preysinge? For thilke folk that ben preysed falsly, they moten nedes han shame of hir preysinges. And yif that folk han geten hem thonk or preysinge by hir desertes, what thing hath thilke preysched or encreased to the conscience of wyse folk, that mesuren hir good, nat by the rumour of the poeple, but by the soothfastnesse of conscience? And yif it seme a fair thing, a man to han encreased and spred his name, than folweth it that it is demed to ben a foul thing, yif it ne be ysprad and encreased. But, as I seyde a litel herbiform that, sin ther mot nedes ben many folk, to whiche folk the renoun of a man ne may nat comen, it befalleth that he, that thou weneest be glorious and renommed, semeth in the nexte partie of the erthes to ben withoute glorie and withoute renoun.

And certes, amonges thise thinges I netrowenat that the prys & grace of the poeple is neither worthy to ben remembred, ne cometh of wyse judgement, ne is ferme perdurably. But now, of this name of gentilesse, what man is it that ne may wel seen how weyn & how flittinge a thing it is? For yif the name of gentilesse be referred to renoun & cleernesse of linage, thanne is gentil name but a forreine thing, that is to seyn, to hem that glorifyen hem of hir linage. for it semeth that gentilesse be a maner preysinge that cometh of the deserte of ancestres. And yif preysinge maketh gentilesse, thanne moten they nedes be gentil that ben preysed. for which thing it folweth, that yif thou ne have no gentilesse of thyself, that is to seyn, preysinge that cometh of thy deserte,

foreine gentilesse ne maketh thee nat gentil. But certes, yif ther be any good in gentilesse, I trowe it be alonly this, that it semeth as that a maner necessitee be imposed to gentil men, for that they ne sholden nat outrayen or forliven fro the virtues of hir noble kinrede.

Metre VI.

Omne hominum genus in terris.

At the linage of men that ben in erthe ben of semblable birthe. On allone is fader of thinges. On allone minis-treth alle thinges. He yaf to the sonne hise bemes; he yaf to the mone hir hornes. He yaf the men to the erthe; he yaf the sterres to the hev-ene. He encloseth with membres the soules that comen fro his hye sete. Channe comen alle mortal folk of noble sede; why noisen ye or bosten of youre eldres? for yif thou loke your biginninge, and God your auctor & your maker, thanne nis ther no forlived wight, but yif he norisshe his corage unto vyces, and forlete his propre burthe.

Prose VII.

Quid autem de corporis voluptatibus.

At what shal I seye of delices of body, of whiche delices the desiringes ben ful of anguiss, & the fulfillinges of hem ben ful of penaunce? How greet syknesse and how grete sorwes unsufferable, right as a maner fruit of wikkednesse, ben thilke delices wont to bringen to the bodies of folk that usen hem! Of whiche delices I not what joye may ben had of hir moevinge. But this wot I wel, that whosoever wole remembre him of hise luxures, he shal wel understonde that the issues of delices ben sorwful & sorye. And yif thilke delices mowen maken folk blisful, than by the same cause moten thise bestes ben cleped blisful; of whiche bestes al the entencium hasteth to fuffille hir bodily jolitee. And the gladnesse of wyf and children were an honest thing, but it hath ben seyd that it is overmuchel ayeins kinde, that children han ben founden tormentours to hir fadres, I not how manye: of whiche children how bytinge is every condicioun, it nedeth nat to tellen it thee, that hast or this tyme assayed it, and art yit now anguissous. In this approve I the sentence of my disciple Euripidis, that seyde, that he that hath no children is weleful by infortune.